

Central Massachusetts Growth Trends

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Central Massachusetts Growth Trends

CMRPC published its 2020 Growth Strategy for Central Massachusetts in early 2000.

The Report was updated this spring to make use of three current data sources:

- 2000 US Census Data;
- 1999 Statewide Land Use Data; and
- Local Building Permit Data.

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The purpose of this effort was two-fold:

- Did the new data require us to change our growth assumptions?
- Did the new data require us to modify our land use planning and zoning recommendations? In other words, were our previous recommendations on target?

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So just what did the new data tell us?

Land Use Losses:

The CMRPC region lost 10,860 acres of farmland and 18,154 acres of forest between 1985 and 1999.



What did this farmland and forestland turn into?

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Mostly new residential development.

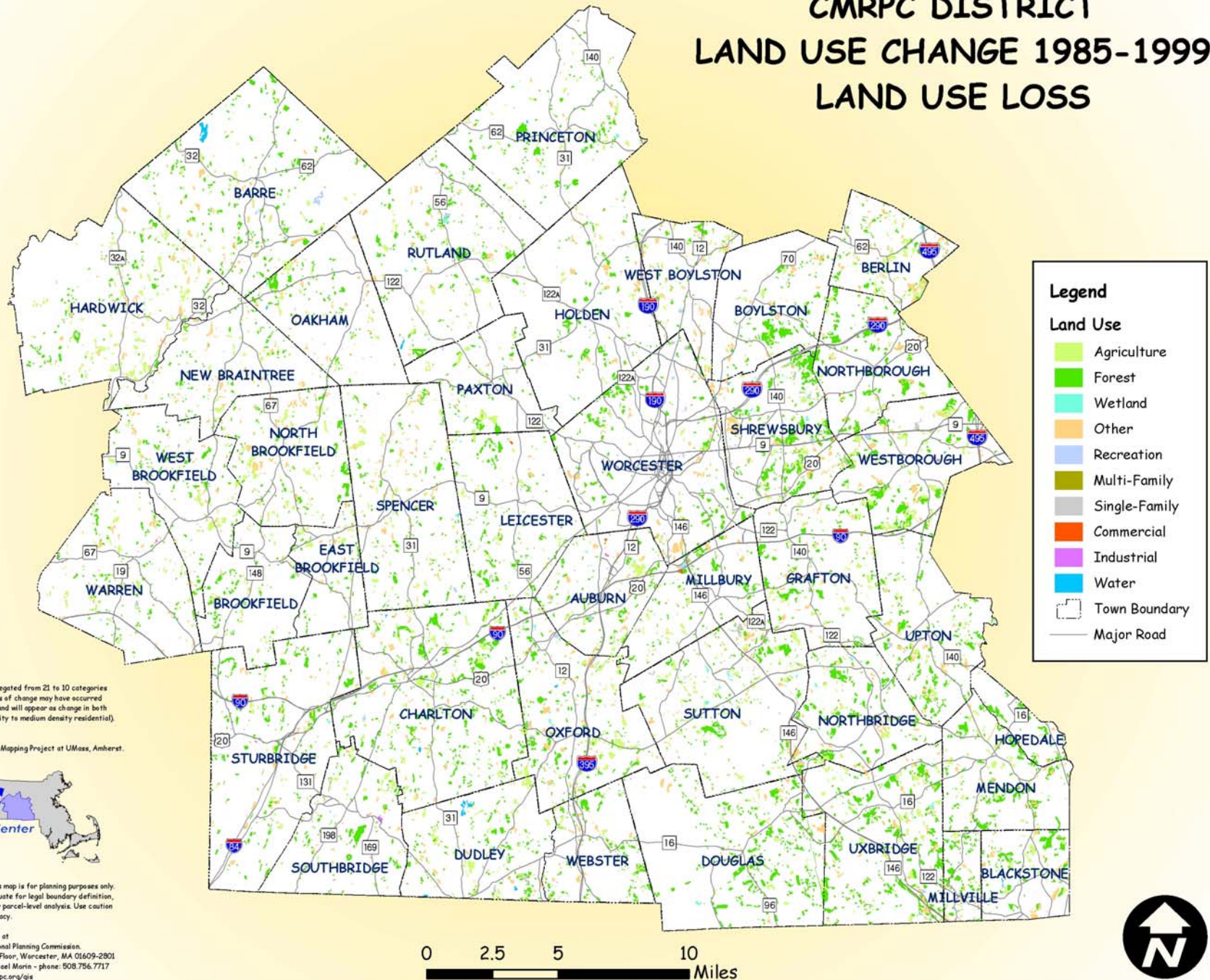
Land Use Gains:

The CMRPC region gained 24,071 acres of new housing between 1985 and 1990.

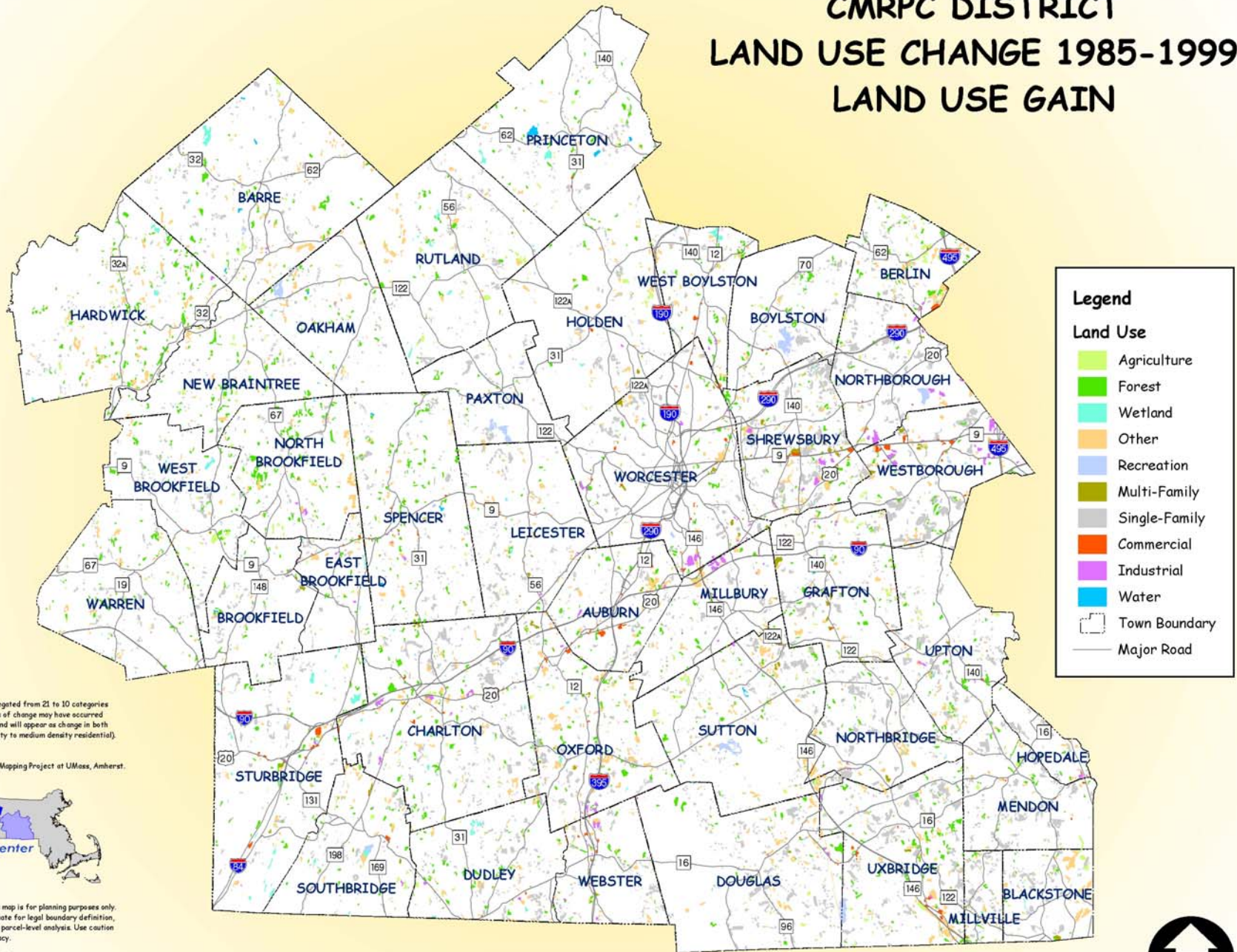
The Region also gained 2,168 acres of commercial and industrial development.



CMRPC DISTRICT LAND USE CHANGE 1985-1999 LAND USE LOSS



CMRPC DISTRICT LAND USE CHANGE 1985-1999 LAND USE GAIN



Land use data has been aggregated from 21 to 10 categories for visual clarity. Some areas of change may have occurred within a combined category and will appear as change in both 1985 and 1999 (e.g. low density to medium density residential).

Source Data:
Land use from the Resource Mapping Project at UMass, Amherst.



Information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only. This information is not adequate for legal boundary definition, regulatory interpretation, or parcel-level analysis. Use caution interpreting positional accuracy.

Produced by the GIS Center at
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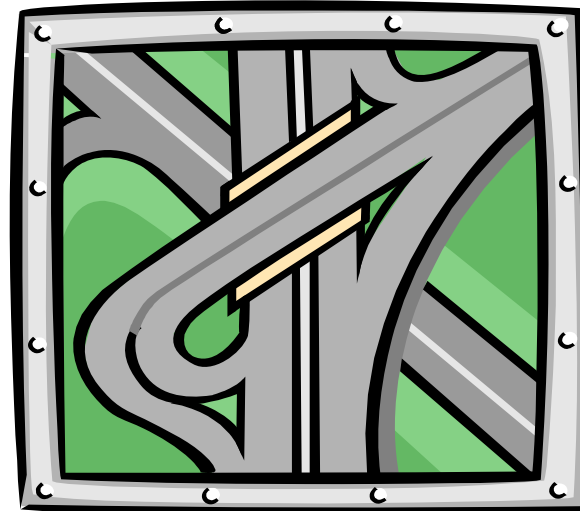
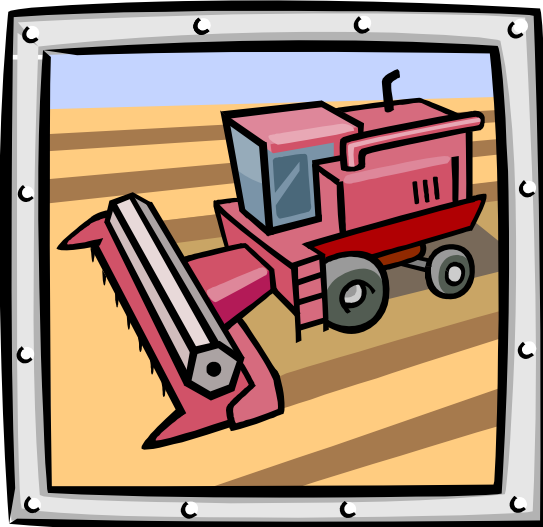
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Other Significant Highlights:

- In a mere 15 years, the amount of land used for single-family housing increased by one third.
- The rate of loss for agricultural lands is accelerating.
- The rate of increase for new residential development is also accelerating.
- Residential development is taking place on larger lot sizes. From '85 to '99, we used an average of 0.78 ac. per unit.
- While multi-family housing construction is on the rise, many communities are still lagging behind in the provision of affordable housing.

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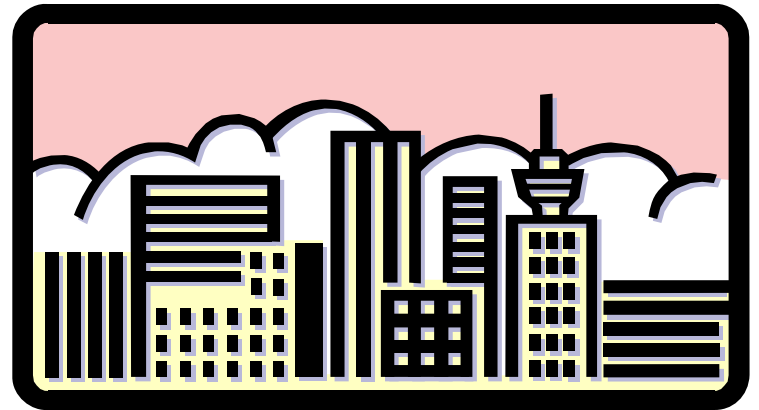
These trends have serious implications for farming as a way of life in Central Massachusetts, and our transportation infrastructure.



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....But There is Some Good News.....

- More land than ever is permanently protected (now roughly 113,000 acres in the CMRPC region).
- New Smart Growth policies are steering transportation investments and housing growth to city and town centers (one of CMRPC's key recommendations).



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So Where Do We Go From Here?

CMRPC is compiling the “Smart Growth” strategies prepared as part of the 25 Community Development Plans funded under EO-418.

CMRPC will then prioritize these strategies along with some commentary regarding their implementation at the local level, and present the results in a series of workshops for each of our five subregions.



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Reversing the negative trends of development will take a comprehensive and integrated effort at the State, regional and local level.

CMRPC stands ready to do its part by working with our member communities to implement “smart growth” strategies at the local level and foster a regional approach to dealing with adverse development trends.

Land Use Reform Is Needed

- Zoning and Subdivision Statutes are long over-due for an overhaul.
- The Land Use Reform Act will be re-filed and needs the Administration's support to insure its passage.
- MLURA addresses troublesome issues such as ANRs, grandfathering, and exempt uses.
- It provides new tools such as impact fees, inclusionary housing.
- It will require consistency between Master Plans and Land Use Controls.